

Christianity is simply a relationship

I know this is very lengthy, but you're not obligated to read it. It's like a little book, and you can read it now or later or never. I think it might help someone though, because it shows the simplicity of Christianity and its true point and whatnot.

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Christianity's original purpose wasn't to be a religion as we often think of it with rituals, institutions, etc., but it became a religion in that sense over time. Its core from the start was just a personal relationship with God, through Jesus. Even in the Old Testament.

To understand this, let's first begin at the very core and beginning of Christianity.

The Purpose

Christianity is first and foremost a relationship. Unlike what most people think of religion, Christianity isn't about following rules. I'll get to what Christian obedience really is and where it stems from, and what the laws are for.

God's goal was always relationship, even in the Old Testament, when laws were more important than it is now, and I'll get to why that is later too.

From the very beginning, God wanted humans to know Him personally—to walk with Him, trust Him, and love Him. (Think of Adam and Eve: the “fall” wasn't just breaking a rule, it was breaking fellowship with God. They knew God was trustworthy, there to care, love, protect, and provide, but they decided to trust themselves over God, even when they knew God was good.)

Why does sin separate us from God?

1 God is perfectly holy and just. **Sin is incompatible with His nature** (Habakkuk 1:13). Like oil and water, sin and God's holiness cannot mix—it separates us until we are reconciled.

2. Also, sin isn't just breaking rules—it's **choosing something over God**. When we sin, we're prioritizing our own desires, pride, or selfishness over God's goodness. This creates a spiritual “gap” between us and Him.

3. On top of that, sin weakens our ability to love God and others the way we were designed to. It blocks intimacy, it makes it harder to feel close to God and to trust Him fully as it clouds our judgment, hardens our heart, and makes us less aware of God's presence.

We can easily imagine how those who do evil things, like murder, violence, etc, are less likely to love God, and we can more clearly imagine a gap between God and them. However, we're all separated from God, no matter how good you think you are. You might have some inner pride, resentment, selfishness, greed, doubt, anxiety, etc, things that make it harder to have a relationship with God, trust him, etc. (Anxiety, while not a sin per se, can turn into a sin when it's turned into a lack of trust in God, despair or rebellion, but God is kind, patient, and compassionate and understands our struggles with anxiety and actually cares deeply and wants to help carry our burdens— it just makes it harder to hear his guidance, trust him, or do what's truly best for you, etc.) These may be minor compared to other sins, but you get how it can separate us from God.

Why do we need laws?

God designed the law to **set a standard**, and this was in order to:

` Guide Us `

We needed guidance as we often struggle to consistently choose what's good. People didn't yet fully understand God's will or how to live holy lives. Without clear rules, it's easy to drift into harmful behaviors. Sin hinders our relationship with God, as explained before, so we needed to know what was not right.

That was the main reason, but these laws are also have other benefits:

` It reveals His holiness, show humans their inability to be perfect `

The laws shows God's perfect moral standard and how we can't actually reach it ourselves. It also reveals his holiness which also makes it easier for us to trust in him.

` It teaches dependence on him `

It shows that we aren't actually as good as we think, so we actually do need God.

God's moral standard is too high for us. It's not unreasonably high for it to be impossible to follow, but it's higher than our own efforts can take us. It shows we need God. God's moral standard is very hard to follow, especially on our own. His standard is not irrational, we're just not good enough. This wasn't a trap—it was a way to show humans that we can't rely on ourselves alone, and how we aren't as 'good' as we think we are.

Without laws, we might not truly know if being *selfish* was bad or not, or if deceiving was bad, or even **twist truths** so we could live our own destructive ways because we won't be certain if they're actually true or not. We might think we're good and holy on our own, and don't need God.

So the laws were given to help the people live rightly with God and each other.

Why do we actually obey?

Obedience stems from trust and love, not following rules for the sake of rules or to earn favor or out of fear, etc.

Obedience is a result of relationship, it's not the main point.

Obedience isn't to control us or make God feel better about himself but to guide us to live better (for our sake not God's)

We don't follow God out of compulsion, fear, pride, or tradition. It comes from faith in God's wisdom and goodness, and love and respect for him so we naturally *want* to as we know his will is better than ours and we love him enough to listen to him.

Some kids listen to their parents out of fear, and some listen because they trust in their parents' wisdom and they love and respect them enough to listen.

God isn't a strict parent who gets angry every time we mess up, he is a patient and understanding parent, and he would never desire any of us to come to him in fear, obligation or compulsion, because that is not a **healthy relationship**.

1 John 2:3–6 says that knowing God and walking with Him naturally produces obedience, because it flows from love, not compulsion.

Obedience **reflects our relationship with God** when it comes from the right reasons. It shows that we trust God and love and respect him enough to listen to him as a parent.

Obedience alone will never be able to satisfy God's moral standard, and our own efforts will always fall short of the perfection needed in reaching Him.

No amount of works you do can bridge the gap between you and God. God's standard is far higher than your own works and efforts can ever take you, so you need him, not yourself.

God is perfect. Any sin is incompatible with his nature. If we desire to come to him on our own, we need absolute perfection, not an ounce of evil.

Choosing to be kind rather than being mean is good, but it's literally the bare minimum, and it doesn't impress God alone.

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In Christianity, we don't earn favor from works, as we can't. The danger of religion without a relationship is that it doesn't please God. (It might also cause people to become prideful or critical of others, missing the point of God's love.)

God warned that empty rituals don't please Him if the heart is far away (Isaiah 29:13, Hosea 6:6). That's why Jesus often confronted the Pharisees: they had religion, but not relationship. Thus, works don't please God if you aren't reconciled to him.

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God gives forgiveness and new life as a gift through Jesus, not something you earn. Salvation is a gift, not a reward. Like all gifts, you accept it, it isn't, or isn't supposed to be forced upon you. Faith shows that you truly want the gift. Also, faith is how we freely respond to God's love. Think of a friendship: both sides have to trust each other. Faith is trusting God back. It's not a reward for how many good things you can do.

We always have the choice to choose good over bad— it isn't a trap — but we rarely ever do, especially if we aren't reconciled with God because in that case, our minds and hearts may not be perfectly aligned with his.

Faith vs Works

But if we sin, feel even just a little bit of sorrow, know it's wrong and we should change, and try to change, that shows that God is living in you and working through you, not to control you, but to guide you to live how he intended!

Why faith without works is dead?

Works are not what saves you, but:

When we deliberately sin and don't feel bad about it, and continue on purpose, that's where the issue lies. When we're reconciled with God, our desires will naturally align with his. It's likely not always immediate, but gradually your desires will align with his.

Sin is entirely against God—it contradicts His holy and perfect nature. When you're in a genuine relationship with God, your heart begins to change. You no longer want to sin deliberately, NOT because you're trying to earn His love, but **because you love Him and desire to honor Him**. This doesn't mean you'll never sin again—far from it. We still stumble and fall. But the difference is that now, **there's a desire to grow, to repent, and to become more like Christ**. It's not about **perfection, but transformation**. It's about a heart that grieves over sin rather than clings to it, and a willingness to let God shape you day by day.

If you sin, it doesn't mean you were never saved because we aren't saved by works but by an intimate relationship with God, not just knowing God exists and following him.

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Obedience and devotion is a natural result of faith, respect and love-- because when you trust in God's wisdom and goodness, you know his will and laws is truly best for you and others so you would want to keep it.

Again, we don't follow rules for the sake of following rules, and we don't follow out of fear or obligation. Relationship leads to some form of works naturally, even if the works is just a change in how you think.

Jesus didn't die so we could have a free pass at sinning, however, he didn't die so we would never sin again, because none of us can ever meet God's moral standard alone. Jesus died so we could have a relationship with God, and learn from him, and become more like him, which in turn makes us less likely to continue destructive habits, but it doesn't make it impossible.

Focus is not on the sins, but on God

If you focus on the sins, chances are you're going to sin much easier, as you're trying to do everything yourself, but if you focus on your relationship with God you'll naturally sin less, because again, when truly loving and trusting in God, your desires and thoughts begin to align more with his, and there sprouts a desire to grow, to repent, and to become more like Christ because you love him and you know he's perfect and wise.

We can never earn God's favor from our efforts, so don't try and fix the sins, come to God and **let Him shape you.**

When we focus on God, the sins will naturally feel less appealing, as it contrasts with his nature. Let me elaborate:

We desire to sin less most when we pursue God (out of love/reverence)

When you sense God nearby you become aware of His holiness and love. Sin starts to feel less appealing, because it contrasts with His goodness.

The closer we grow to God, the more our minds are renewed (Romans 12:2) Our desires are transformed and aligned with his (Psalm 37:4-5).

We begin to love what God loves naturally. This doesn't mean sin disappears instantly, but our heart wants alignment with Him more than the temporary pleasure sin offers.

Feeling God's presence doesn't erase temptation, but it strengthens our will and redirects our desires. Over time, this daily closeness reshapes your heart, so choosing God becomes natural.

The Old Testament's Temporary Solution

*** Even after God gave the laws, humans still weren't fully ready for a deep, personal relationship with Him. People could have a form of relationship with God in the Old Testament, but it was limited and indirect

*** Full reconciliation and intimacy with God became possible through Jesus. Jesus was both God and Man, so he was perfect to bridge the gap between God and Man. *** In the Old

Testament, the gap was mediated through obedience coming from trust and reverence, sacrifices that pointed to Jesus, etc, but in Christianity the gap is mediated through Jesus.

*** I'll say it again, humanity is separated from God by sin, which taints and separates people from God's pure nature which is not compatible with our nature. This separation is one that we cannot bridge on our own, as we cannot satisfy the demands of God's infinite holiness through our own works or efforts.

Obedience was a temporary fix before Jesus' arrival, as it showed faith in God's wisdom, love, and goodness, and devotion out of love and respect rather than fear or obligation, as mentioned before,— which in itself **reflects** a deep, faithful, loving relationship. However, it could only be a temporary fix.

That is because:

Following rules can guide behavior, but they can't change the heart completely. They may stop certain actions, but it doesn't change what you truly desire in your heart. We need a true, deep, close relationship with God, as mentioned before.

People could obey laws outwardly but still be selfish, prideful, or sinful inwardly.

People followed rules sometimes for fear, pride, or tradition, not genuine love.

The law couldn't save, and humans couldn't fully keep it. God's standard was perfection which we cannot keep all the time. No matter how hard they tried, everyone fell short. This taught that salvation and true holiness must come from God, not human effort alone (Galatians 2:16).

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Therefore it wasn't and couldn't be a replacement for Jesus. Laws were necessary but not sufficient—they could show the way, but couldn't create the heart transformation needed for a full relationship. Deep relationship with God requires trust, love, and dependence, not just rule-following. Obedience should be a result of faith and love.

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Faith was still central, not obedience, because obedience stems from faith. Again, obedience out of wanting to prove yourself or earn God's love is not the obedience God intends.

In the OT it was when Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). That shows a relationship, which comes from trust in God's wisdom and

goodness, love and respect , which leads to obedience because we know God knows better (I think I said that multiple times already but whatever). Relationship was what God was after from the start. Obedience is a way to show faith when it comes from love and trust rather than fear. It wasn't when Abraham obeyed, it was when he believed, and belief leads to obedience because you trust in God's wisdom.

Jesus

Therefore, Jesus didn't come to start a new religion; He came to reconcile people to God and bridge the gap between us and God. The core of Jesus' teachings were "Follow me" and "Abide in me".

Jesus came to invite people into a personal relationship with God—to know Him, trust Him, and follow Him— no rituals, institutions, labels.

The early followers of Jesus focused on loving God, loving others, and living out God's ways in everyday life. They also weren't trying to start a new religion— their focus was on following Him personally, learning from Him, and experiencing God's love directly. Jesus didn't hand out a "religion manual." He invited people into a living connection with God.

History Lesson

After Jesus' resurrection, the apostles began teaching and writing letters (like the books of the New Testament) to guide communities of believers. As Christianity spread, churches were formed to support believers, teach, and worship together. That's when Christianity started to look a little more like what we now call a "religion" with structure, teachings, and community. However, the core is still a personal relationship with God, not following rules.